

# **CONSERVATIVE SBC LEADER CALLS FOR UNITY/ SBC CONSERVATIVES ARE UNSCRIPTURAL PRAGMATISTS**

March 16, 1998 (David W. Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, [www.wayoflife.org](http://www.wayoflife.org)) - Southern Baptist leader Freddie Gage has called upon "moderates" and "conservatives" within the Convention to "stop fighting and start fishing" for the souls of men. He made this challenge to the more than 5,000 in attendance at the Texas Baptist Evangelism Conference in Fort Worth in January. He said: "I am calling on moderates and conservatives to join hands in evangelism, soul winning and ministering to the hurting, bruised, battered, broken, stressed-out and depressed" (*Star-Telegram*, Ft. Worth, Texas, Thurs., Jan. 15, 1998).

Gage said that conservative Southern Baptists already cooperate with Pentecostal-Charismatic leaders such as Bill McCartney of Promise Keepers, Pat Robertson of the Christian Broadcasting Network, and Paul and Jan Crouch of Trinity Broadcasting Network. "If we can work with Pentecostal charismatics, surely Baptist moderates and conservatives and fundamentalists can work together to reach this state and America for Jesus," he said.

Gage noted that the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board recently reported that 73 percent of the SBC's 40,000 churches had 10 or fewer baptisms in 1996. Of those, 7,334 reported no baptisms.

Gage is one of the "conservative" leaders who fought for control of the Southern Baptist Convention in the 1980s. His philosophy demonstrates how biblically weak these SBC conservatives are, even though they have a reputation for being bold, uncompromising Christian leaders. We get no joy out of reporting this, but we believe it is necessary. I grew up in the Southern Baptist Convention, and it would be a great thrill, in fact, to my heart to see influential preachers like Freddie Gage stand uncompromisingly for the Holy Scriptures.

## **SBC CONSERVATIVES ARE NEW-EVANGELICALS**

The Bible forbids Brother Gage and his conservative SBC friends to work with Pentecostal-Charismatics like McCartney and Crouch, and it also forbids them to work with SBC "moderates" who deny (or at the very least support with those who deny) the perfect inspiration of the Bible, the blood atonement of Jesus Christ, and other key doctrines of the Word of God. The Bible commands God's people to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Godly Bible teachers through the centuries have interpreted this to mean that false doctrine is a basis of separation. I have illustrated this in the article "Does Romans 16:17 Demand Separation on the Basis of Doctrine?" (June 9, 1997), which is excerpted from our 1996 book [\*Things Hard to Be Understood: A Handbook on Biblical Difficulties\*](#).

Gage's admission that Southern Baptist conservatives work with radical ecumenical organizations such as Promise Keepers and Trinity Broadcasting Network is proof that the SBC conservatives are New-Evangelical compromisers at best.

The three men Gage named--McCartney, Robertson, and Crouch--are some of the key men most responsible for the damnable breaking down of the walls between truth and error in our generation. In addition to their own theological heresies, all three of these men have a close and non-critical relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. Robertson was one of the Christian leaders who met with and praised Pope John Paul II when he came to the United States in October 1995. In fact, Robertson attended the papal mass during that visit, and he said: "We all admire the Holy Father tremendously. We all want to build bridges with the Catholic Church" (*New York Times*, Oct. 8, 1995). Robertson wants to build bridges to Rome in spite of the fact that the Rome tells people that sins are forgiven through baptism, that the mass is the re-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that Mary can hear and answer prayer, that the Catholic priesthood can pronounce the forgiveness of sins, and that the pope is the rock of the church.

Preaching the Gospel to the unsaved is a primary work of the churches (Matt. 28:18-29; Mark 16:15), but this labor of love is not so important that it means we can disobey other portions of Scripture to do so. Such a philosophy is Jesuitism, that the end justifies the means. It is the philosophy of humanistic pragmatism. Nothing could be more unscriptural.

### **GOD REQUIRES OBEDIENCE TO BIBLE DETAILS**

God has always required obedience to the details of His Word. When Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it, God punished him severely, forbidding him to enter into the promised land (Num. 20:7-12). When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord, they were consumed with fire (Lev. 10:1-11). Their error was "merely" in the manner of their offering. Most men would not look upon this as a very serious problem. When King Saul refused to "utterly destroy" the Amalekites and their cattle, God removed the kingship from him (1 Sam. 15). Saul obeyed most of the Lord's commandment; it was only in the details that he failed. When Uzzah reached out and touched the cart to stabilize the ark of the tabernacle, God "smote him there for his error" (2 Sam. 6:6-7). Surely that was a very small matter in the eyes of men, "merely" a matter of how the articles of the tabernacle were to be transported (Num. 4:15,19,20; 7:9; 1 Chron. 15:11-14). In fact David was offended at God that day (verse 9), but God treated the matter with capital significance. When Hymenaeus and Philetus "merely" spiritualized the resurrection, saying it was passed already, Paul denounced them publicly as dangerous false teachers (2 Tim. 2:16-18). The details of God's Word do matter. The pragmatist preacher will tell you otherwise, but do not be deceived.

### **WHO ARE THE MODERATES?**

Who are these "moderates" with whom Freddie Gage desires the SBC conservatives to unite? "Moderate" is the name which the theologically liberal element within the SBC has taken for itself. The term is a smokescreen to hide the fact that they are characterized by theological heresies such as the denial of the perfect inspiration of scripture and the blood atonement of Jesus Christ. They don't like to be called modernists or liberals, which were the terms used to describe such men during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversies earlier in this century.

The Southern Baptist Convention has been infiltrated with theological modernism for at least six decades.

"Southern Baptist Theological Seminary finally fell into apostasy under the administration of her sixth president, Dr. Ellis A. Fuller--president from 1942 to 1950. It was Fuller who had George A. Buttrick bring the E.Y. Mullins Lectures in 1943. Buttrick was the liberal pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. Liberalism came swiftly upon Southern Seminary; this was only nine years after A.T. Robertson's death. Fuller then brought in Dr. John Mackay, the liberal president of Princeton Seminary, to lecture in 1947, the same year that he brought Dr. Nels F.S. Ferre to deliver the Julius B. Gay Lectures at Southern" (Dr. D.O. Beale, *S.B.C. House on the Sand*, p. 32).

Nels Ferre denied practically every tenet of Bible Christianity, including the perfect inspiration of Scripture, the deity and virgin birth and substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ, the bodily resurrection, and the second coming. He claimed that Mary was pregnant through an immoral relationship with a German soldier, that "the use of the Bible as the final authority for Christian truth is idolatry," and that "Jesus never was nor became God" (Ferre, *The Sun and the Umbrella*, pp. 39,112,191). The jacket of Ferre's book, a copy of which I have in my library, carried an endorsement by Southern Baptist minister Edwin McNeill Poteat.

The long-standing, entrenched theological apostasy within the SBC has been carefully documented in such books as *S.B.C. House on the Sand?* by Dr. David O. Beale (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1995), *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), *The Bible in the Balance* by Dr. Harold Lindsell (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), and *Inside the Southern Baptist Convention* by Dr. R.L. Hymers (Collingswood, NJ: The Bible for Today, 1990). We have published a smaller but more up-to-date review of the theological apostasy within the Southern Baptist Convention entitled *Independent Baptists and Southern Baptists* by D.W. Cloud (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 2nd edition, 1997). We have also published many articles documenting the continuing widespread presence of theological heresy within the SBC. These articles can be viewed at the Way of Life web site under the [Southern Baptist section of the End Times Apostasy Database](#), and they are also available in the [O Timothy Computer Library](#).

I will give one example of a Southern Baptist on the "moderate" side today. His name is R. Kirby Godsey, and he has been the president of the Southern Baptist Mercer University in Alabama since 1979. His 1996 book entitled *When We Talk about God ... Let's Be Honest* is one of the most vile, heretical things I have ever read, and my library contains the works of hundreds of modernists and other heretics! Consider some of Godsey's perverted theology:

"Our confidence in the Bible as Holy Scripture should not rest upon believing the book to be a miraculous, divine dictation where its writers simply serve as God's recorders. ... To ascribe infallibility to the written words of the Bible is wrong. ... Jesus often tried to bring his followers beyond the pages of Jewish Scriptures. No human words are sufficient to contain God. ... Turning the Bible into a rule book distorts the power of the gospel and misappropriates the teaching of Scripture. ... The notion of the Bible's infallibility, instead of giving honor to the Bible, actually leads to a treacherous idolatry of the Bible" (R. Kirby Godsey, *When We Talk about God ... Let's Be Honest*, Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1996, pp. 50,51,52).

In this one book Southern Baptist "moderate" R. Kirby Godsey denied or questioned practically every key doctrine in the Word of God. In fact, Godsey even claims "the notion that God is the all powerful, the high and mighty principal of heaven and earth should be laid aside."

Though many Southern Baptists have been concerned about Godsey's apostasy, he has not been dealt with in any biblical fashion and he remains in power. In December 1996, the trustees of Mercer voted unanimously to support Godsey's presidency under the banner of "academic freedom." In September 1997 a committee of the Georgia Baptist Convention (GBC) determined that Godsey's book is "punctuated with heresy." In spite of this, on September 11, the GBC voted overwhelmingly to continue its relationship with the school.

We are also not talking merely about one man and his lone heretical views. We are talking about a large, influential Southern Baptist school. For almost two decades, students at Mercer have been influenced by this man and by professors who hold similar views but who are not as bold as Godsey about putting their views into print; and these students have graduated into positions within the SBC and have, in turn, influenced great numbers of church members.

### **SBC CONSERVATIVES HAVE NEVER HAD BIBLICAL GOALS**

The SBC "conservatives" told the world that they were concerned about modernism and this is why they "took control" of the Convention, but Freddie Gage reminds us that THEY HAVE ALWAYS GIVEN MIXED SIGNALS AND HAVE NEVER HAD THE GOAL OF DEALING WITH HERESY AFTER A TRULY BIBLICAL FASHION. The Bible is plain about how to deal with false teachers. First, if they refuse to repent, they are to be disciplined out of the churches (Titus 3:10-11). Second, they are to be separated from. They are to be avoided (Rom. 16:17-18), shunned (2 Tim. 2:16), "purged" (2 Tim. 2:21). There is to be no fellowship or communion with them (2 Cor. 6:14). We are not to receive them into our houses nor even to bid them Godspeed (2 John 9-11).

This is not what the SBC conservatives have done with the theological heretics. We do not know of even one who was evicted from a Southern Baptist church. Even if there was an isolated case or two, it was an exception and was never the stated goal of the conservatives. They have also never called for biblical separation from the heretics. They have put some of the heretics out of some of the schools and off some of the boards, but they did not call for the same heretics to be disciplined out of the Convention. They have continued all along to accept Cooperative Program funds from churches which hold heretics in their membership.

The Bible warns that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). Southern Baptist conservatives apparently do not believe this. Wise Christians do not follow the leadership of men who do not believe the Bible.

See ["When Was the Southern Baptist Convention Delivered from Liberalism?"](http://wayoflife.org/~dcloud) in the Southern Baptist section of the End Times Apostasy Database at the Way of Life Web site -- <http://wayoflife.org/~dcloud>